

May 18, 1971

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—*Extensions of Remarks*

precisely what he accuses my committee of doing and I am disappointed that Mr. Epstein's widely publicized lesson in elementary journalism has been so little regarded.

RICHARD H. ICHORD,
Chairman.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

LAOS: A LAKE OF BLOOD

HON. DONALD M. FRASER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 17, 1971

Mr. FRASER. Mr. Speaker, a legal resident of Minnesota, Mr. James E. Malia, is the director of the International Voluntary Services program in Laos. I ask permission to insert in the RECORD after these remarks two letters, one addressed to me, the other to the President, written recently by Mr. Malia. I also want to place in the RECORD an April 7, 1971, New York Times piece by Fred Branfman entitled "A Lake of Blood."

Mr. Speaker, we should not be surprised by these descriptions of the decimation of the Lao and Meo people in Laos. The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, chaired by the senior Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), has made our role in this slaughter "perfectly clear." See the February 24, 1971, RECORD at page S1872 for a number of press articles detailing the human costs of the "unknown war" in Laos.

As Mr. Malia writes the President:

We recognize that ours is not the only violence against these people. We condemn also the destruction and killing brought by the North Vietnamese. But we do not believe that their presence in Laos, nor the presence of an indigenous Communist movement, justifies U.S. military activity against an entire society.

Few of those who live in the geographical area of Indochina known to us as Laos have any understanding of Laos as a nation. U.S. involvement in that tragic land has, in conjunction with the aggressive Vietnamese, insured that hundreds of thousands, already dead, or dying or marked for death, will not live to be Laotians. To talk of self-determination in such circumstances is hypocrisy. U.S. noninvolvement will not lead to either a bloodbath or most likely, to Vietnamese withdrawal. But as Mr. Malia concludes his letter to me:

The peoples of these countries, who must live with the solutions to their mutual problems, must be allowed to work them out amongst themselves. The results may not be acceptable to us, but they will undoubtedly in some way be acceptable to those who must live with them. This is what is most important.

Our intervention in Laos has made the ultimate reconciliation more difficult and it will be most likely less advantageous to the peoples of Laos. The lesson is clear. In areas not vital to our national security, any military intervention must have the sanction of the world community and it must be agreeable to those peoples most intimately involved in the area.

Any other policy can only lead to other Laotian tragedies.

The material follows:

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY
SERVICES, INC.,
APO San Francisco, March 18, 1971.

Hon. DONALD FRASER,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

Sir: I am a resident of Minnesota and am presently the Director of the International Voluntary Services program in Laos. I have been in Laos for the past three and a half years and thus feel that I speak with some credibility when talking about Laos, its people, and what the American military presence is doing to these people and this country. It is my conviction that the American military presence in Laos and the para-military activity that supports it is not in the best interest of Laos or its people and that it should be withdrawn by the end of this year.

A basic reality in Southeast Asia is North Viet-Nam. They are a strong, competent, aggressive people. The other peoples of Southeast Asia must in some way come to terms with them. This is not a new phenomena as for the past five hundred years peoples in this part of the world have had to in some way reconcile themselves with North Viet-Nam. This is still the case today. Continuing American involvement in Southeast Asia only forestalls this reconciliation and at a price devastating to the indigenous people and to ourselves.

In Laos, a land of diverse ethnic groups, cultures and traditions, we have used these divisions in our cause against Communism and North Viet-Nam. The Central Intelligence Agency arms and directs an army of tribal people, mostly Meo, against the communist insurgents and the North Vietnamese. With money we have exploited their traditional desire for independence for our objectives. For the Meo it has meant the destruction of nearly half their population and the establishment of a nearly irreparable breach between these people and the North Vietnamese. Now we arm boys to do most of the fighting. They have little training and little chance against the well trained Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops. Why do we continue to support this carnage? Isn't it time that someone said stop?

In the whole of Laos we support a right wing government controlled by the military. We have paid off the generals and upper class elite to keep the government loyal to us so as to be a vehicle through which we can carry out our objectives in Laos. We support an army which must conscript at gun point and which is slowly ridding the country side of its young men. To what end is all this?

We have bombed civilian areas in a systematic destruction of the human basis for society. People, homes, and communities were destroyed. Finally, when given the chance, the people left their homeland to come to an area where the Americans do not bomb. Is this in the best interest of Laos' people?

Laos and its people are slowly being destroyed by a continuing American military presence that uses this country and these people in our fight against communism. President Nixon's Vietnamization policy will only continue to use these people for the protection of American lives, for the perpetration of American objectives. Such activity is demeaning to a country which espouses to values of human dignity and equality. Thus I would urge that in your capacity as a United States Representative you do all that is possible toward bringing about a swift and total withdrawal of all American military activity in Laos and in Southeast Asia. The peoples of these countries, who must live with the solutions to their mutual problems, must be allowed to work them out amongst themselves. The results may not be

acceptable to us, but they will undoubtedly in some way be acceptable to those who must live with them. This is what is most important.

If I can be of any help to you in the future, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. MALIA,
Director, IVS, Vientiane, Laos.

VIENTIANE, LAOS,
March 15, 1971.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

Sir: We are deeply distressed by your decision to encourage and to support the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos. We have heard and read your explanations of this decision, in terms of shortening the war and protecting American lives. But we know that the military reality will be further chaos and further suffering among people who have already suffered much because of American military activity. We condemn this policy which uses the Lao people as pieces in a grand global design which they neither understand nor care about. Though there would still be fighting without the American involvement, the intensity of the present destruction takes place for reasons which have virtually nothing to do with local political alignments or conditions. We condemn also the eagerness to protect American lives by the sacrifice of Asian lives.

We are not military experts or political analysts. We are volunteers concerned for our fellow man, working to help them in agriculture, social welfare, community development, and education. Collectively, we have lived and worked among the Lao people for many years, speaking their language, coming to know and understand many of their concerns. During this time, we have also come to know the destruction and sorrow brought to them by the United States military action.

The extensive bombing of civilian areas is particularly vicious. In talking with refugees, we have heard what the days and nights under bombardment are like. Refugees tell of being forced to live in holes and caves, of having to farm at night, of the systematic destruction by U.S. war planes of the human basis for a society. These people were not soldiers, nor were there soldiers in their villages. Yet they were bombed; their homes were destroyed and anti-personnel bombs were dropped to kill and maim people on contact. Children were particularly vulnerable. So now these people have fled their homeland to live in resettlement villages in areas where the United States does not yet bomb.

The CIA trains and supports its own clandestine army in Laos. A large proportion of the soldiers in this "secret" army are from the Meo and other tribal groups. The U.S. has exploited their traditional toughness and independence in our own crusade against Communism. The result has been the decimation and dislocation of the tribal populace.

The Meo have lost nearly half their male population, and much of the fighting is now done by young boys with little training of any kind. Much of their traditional culture has been destroyed in the repeated forced migration into inhospitable but "safe" areas. Our use of these people has also opened a nearly irreparable breach between the tribal people and the North Vietnamese. The need in Laos, as official American statements supposedly recognize, is for reconciliation, not greater division, greater bitterness.

Yet now, with strong backing from U.S. military forces, the South Vietnamese are fighting in southern Laos. This has upset a delicate status quo and expanded the fighting once more into populated areas west of the invaded territory, as well as aggravating already serious fighting elsewhere within

MORI/CDF